

The Denver Unity Meeting (2)
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We begin our exposition of the mistakes of Bro. Carl Ketcherside (hereafter referred to as Bro. K.) by noticing one of his less serious mistakes. He takes the position that the word "gospel" means only the good news of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. He says, "Not a single one of the New Testament epistles is a part of the gospel. They are the doctrine of the apostles." So the gospel is only that which one must believe to become a Christian, but the doctrine is what must be taught to Christians that they may grow in the knowledge of the Lord. There is enough truth in this position to make it look plausible, but the use that can be made of it makes it necessary for us to expose it as false. Bro. K. admits that one must obey the gospel or be lost (2 Thess. 1:8-10), but he does not think failure to obey doctrine is so serious. He thinks perversion of the gospel is serious (Gal. 1:6-9), but mistakes or perversions of doctrine are not serious enough to cause a break in fellowship.

Now we will notice some passages where the word "gospel" covers more ground than Bro. K. uses it to cover, and where it means what Bro. K. uses the word "doctrine" to cover. In Rom. 1:15, Paul says he is "ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome." He was writing to the church in Rome, so Paul could preach the gospel to the church. Bro. K. says "you cannot evangelize (preach the gospel to) Christians." Again, Paul says God "shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel" (Rom. 2:16). Those who do not believe the gospel are judged, condemned, already (John 3:18), but the judgment of the last day will be on the basis of whether men visited the sick, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, etc. (Matt. 25:31-46). According to Bro. K., Paul should have said God shall judge men by his doctrine, not his gospel.

Paul uses the word "gospel" in the first two chapters of Galatians in a way Bro. K. cannot use it. In Gal. 1:6-9, Paul marvels that the people are being moved by a perversion of the gospel when they were being led by Judaizers to accept circumcision. These Judaizers believed in Christ; they were baptized believers, so children of God. They did not wish to cause the Galatians to cease to believe in Jesus; they simply wanted them to practice circumcision as the law of Moses commanded (Gal. 6:12-16). According to Bro. K. this is a point of doctrine, and doctrine was being perverted, not the gospel. Again, when Paul went into the Jerusalem conference and false brethren brought pressure on him to circumcise Gentiles, he said he did not give way to them an hour, "that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:5). According to Bro. K., circumcision is no part of the gospel, and the truth of the gospel could continue with brethren whether they practiced circumcision or not. Bro. K. would have said, "that the truth of the doctrine might continue with you." Again, after the conference was over and Paul and Peter were in Antioch, Peter ceased to eat with Gentiles for fear of brethren from Jerusalem, led Barnabas to do so, and Paul said, "I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:14). According to Bro. K., Peter's action was a doctrinal mistake; Peter did not walk uprightly according to the doctrine. But Paul, evidently, did not use the word "gospel" in the limited sense in which Bro. K. uses it.

Next, if the word "doctrine" is to be used only of those things that "do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the church," as Bro. K. would say in the language of Thomas Campbell, we fail to understand why the word was used in certain passages. For instance, Acts 13:4-12. Here we have the story of Paul's efforts to convert a proconsul in spite of the efforts of a sorcerer to prevent the conversion. The proconsul called Paul that he might "hear the word of God." Since Paul was trying to convert the man, he would preach the gospel of Christ to him. So the word of God here is the gospel. The sorcerer's efforts to prevent the proconsul's conversion caused Paul to strike him blind for a season. When the proconsul saw what was done, he believed, "being astonished at the teaching (doctrine) of the Lord." Why did not Luke

say the proconsul was astonished at the gospel of the Lord, since that is what Paul preached in order to convert him? According to the distinction Bro. K. makes between the words, the word "doctrine" would have to be used.

Again, when Paul went to Athens, he preached Jesus and the resurrection (Acts 17:18). According to Bro. K., this is another expression which says Paul preached the gospel of Christ, to which we would all agree. See 1 Cor. 15:1-4. However, Bro. K. would say that the word "doctrine" could not be used to describe what Paul preached, while some of the rest of us would not be so sure. The men of Athens took Paul to Mars' hill, saying, "May we know what this new teaching (doctrine) is, which is spoken by thee?" The Greeks used the word "doctrine" (*didache*) to describe Paul's preaching of Christ and the resurrection. Bro. K. would not use the word "doctrine"; he would use the word "gospel."

Next, Paul thanked God that the brethren at Rome had become obedient to the form of teaching (doctrine—*didache*), and through that obedience they had been made free from sin and had become servants to righteousness (Rom. 6:17, 18). By obeying the form of doctrine they had ceased to be children of the devil and had become children of God. If by obeying the form of doctrine they had become children of God, it follows that the doctrine was the thing preached. Surely they did not obey something different from that which was preached to them. Bro. K. would never say people become Christians by obeying the form of doctrine; he would say they did so by obeying the form of the gospel. He says we become Christians through a knowledge of the gospel, and that we grow to maturity through a knowledge of the doctrine. But Paul says these people at Rome became Christians by obeying from the heart the form of the doctrine, and he implies that the doctrine was preached to them to make Christians.

Bro. K. has a little trouble with baptism and its relation to the gospel. Once he asked, "What is it to obey the gospel?" Then he answered by using Rom. 10:16, "They have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" He continues, "So belief of the report made concerning Jesus is obeying the gospel, climaxed by manifestation of that faith by baptism . . . and this is the only test of faith." From this we might conclude that Bro. K. thinks that faith and baptism are part of the gospel, but not so. In another place he says, "Preaching the gospel is one thing and telling people to be baptized is another thing." And he takes the old Baptist debater's dodge by quoting 1 Cor. 1:17 to prove that baptism is no part of the gospel. Again, he says, "Baptism is no part of apostolic doctrine and it is not a part of the gospel. Baptism is a median line that stands between apostolic doctrine and the gospel." He cannot afford to say baptism is part of the gospel, for that would force him to believe that all who are not baptized are lost, since those who do not obey the gospel are to be punished with everlasting destruction (2 Thess. 1:8-10). He teaches that all who believe that Jesus is the Son of God are begotten children of God and if they are sincere they may go to heaven whether sprinkled, immersed, or neither.

Notice this predicament in which Bro. K. gets involved. He teaches that the gospel is God's word to bring us into a saved state and the doctrine is God's word to mature us in that state. So gospel plus doctrine equals all of God's word revealed to us. Baptism is neither gospel nor doctrine, so it follows that baptism is no part of God's word revealed to us. Bro. K. has expressed himself as being displeased with this type of reasoning used by debaters, so my guess is that he will not appreciate this line of reasoning which exposes his errors. At least I hope he will give them a careful study.